

United States Department of Health and Human Services
Administration on Aging
Focus On American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian Elders

Did You Know?

- *In 2000, 296,159 people identified themselves as an American Indian or Alaska Native (AI/AN) and 155,076 Native Hawaiians (NH), age 55 and older, on the U.S. Census. This represents 11.96 % of the AI/AN population and 12.8% of the NH population.*
- *There are 562 Federally Recognized Tribes; 335 are in the lower 48 states and 227 are in Alaska. Each Tribe has it's own culture, values and traditions*
- *Life expectancy of AIs/Ans/NHs continues to lag behind the rest of the population. The life expectancy for AIs/Ans is 71.1 and 74.3 for NHs compared to 78.9 for the general U.S. population. The life expectancy of American Indians in North and South Dakota is 64.3 years.*
- *Compared to the U.S. population::*
 - *AI/AN elders are 173% more likely and NH elders are 162% more likely to have diabetes;*
 - *AI/AN elders are nearly 50% more likely to have experienced congestive heart failure;*
 - *AI/AN elders are 44% more likely and NH elders are 55% more likely to have asthma; and*
 - *AI/AN elders are nearly 18 percent more likely to have experienced a stroke.*

Helping American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian Elders Stay Healthy

AI/AN/NH elders are the keepers of traditions in their communities as well as teachers and role models for the younger generations.

The Administration on Aging's Older Americans Act (OAA) programs provide vital home and community based services to help elders remain healthy and involved in their communities. The services provided include:

- meals delivered to the homebound;
- meals served in congregate settings;
- transportation services;
- health promotion activities;
- health screenings
- information and assistance; and
- social, cultural, and intergenerational activities.

These programs complement existing health care and social support systems.

Home and Community Based Long-Term Care

One of the more pressing concerns raised by Tribal leaders is the need for accessible, culturally appropriate long-term care (LTC) services. The LTC services most commonly available in native communities include chronic disease management, emergency and acute primary medical care, home health care, home-delivered meals, and chore and personal care services. Assisted living, adult day care, and respite care are becoming more available, and a few Tribes provide hospice care and nursing home care.

AoA, in partnership with the Indian Health Service and the National Indian Council on Aging, convened a Roundtable to discuss LTC issues facing Indian communities. The Roundtable report can be found at www.ihs.gov/PublicInfo.

Although several LTC services are available, family and friends continue to be the primary providers of LTC. In fact, one out of every four people is a caregiver for a family member or friend. AoA's new Native American Caregiver Support Program provides critical support for family caregivers by providing information and assistance, counseling, training, support, respite care, and supplemental services.

Where You Can Get Help

For information on senior community services, contact the Administration on Aging at (202) 619-7501 or <http://www.aoa.gov>.

If you or someone you care about needs assistance, please contact AoA's Eldercare Locator at 1 (800) 677-1116. or <http://www.aoa.eldercare.gov>

In Case You Missed It

"We know that an increasing number of American Indian and Alaska Native elders need assistance, and most prefer to remain in their homes, communities and on their reservation. Our programs help to promote independence, well-being and positive lifestyles while preserving the heritage of American Indian culture."

Josefina G. Carbonell
Assistant Secretary for Aging